DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 117 599 CG 010 303

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TITLE The Others-Concept and Adult Behavior in Small Groups.
PUB DATE [72]
NOTE 9p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Adults; *Developmental Psychology; Group Dynamics; Individual Characteristics; *Interpersonal Competence; Maturation; *Personality Assessment; Research Projects; *Social Development; Task Performance
IDENTIFIERS *Others Concept

ABSTRACT

In other studies to be reported in this symposium, the others-concept is seen to be a psychological construct of emerging importance for understanding children's behavior. It would appear, however, to have relevance for all age groups. Thus this researcher sought to investigate whether or not the relationships which had been previously found between children's others-concepts and their group behavior could be demonstrated in an adult population. An adult form of the PHT (the PHT-A) was developed and given to university students. High and low scoring subjects were asked to work in small groups on a task appropriate for college students. The group sessions were tape recorded, and these recordings were coded blindly and analyzed statistically, along the lines of the Barnett and Zuker studies with children. Significant behavioral differences were found between subjects who had high others-concept and subjects who had low others-concepts. The study therefore demonstrated that the others-concept is a theoretical construct which is applicable to adults as well as to children. In so doing, the value of the others-concept as a construct for working with children was enhanced. (Author)

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The Others-Concept

And Adult Behavior In Small Groups

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by

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The theoretical basis for the development of the Paired Hands Test for children centers on the others-concept, as explained and elaborated upon in the previously given addresses. This theory, though still in the very formative stages, adheres to the belief that a measureable aspect of human behavior can be referred to in a clear, concise manner; this is what is meant when we say that children possess an others-concept which we measure in a quantifiable, objective way. But inherent in the belief is the promise of a more basic statement: that a person, at any point in his or her life, possesses an others-concept capable of quantifiable, objective measurement.

This additional statement implies some aspect of continuity between the others-concept of children, and the others-concepts of developmentally maturing, growing human beings. What we are doing is suggesting the theoretical existence of an others-concept in every individual, from his very early social experiences to his last ones - approximating a womb-to-tomb existence.

Thus, briefly, what I sought to do in my research was to establish the efficacy of the Paired Hands Test in delineating an adult's others-concept, and, in so doing, secure the theoretical basis of the universal

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existence of the others-concept, or less grandly, the existence of the others-concept in adults as well as in children. I might alsc add that there would be considerable benefit from finding an objective personality assessment instrument useful for determining social behavioral tendencies for adults, and that the Paired Hands Test-Adult might be a potentially highly useful technique in its own right.

Studies by Pearson (1969) and Beatty (1972) suggested that the Paired Hands Test for children might be inappropriate for an adult population. Concurring with this, I first set about to create an adult form of the test.

What was primarily necessary was to devise statements to correspond to the twenty slides which were more appropriate for adults than the statements which Drs. Barnett and Zucker used in the children's form. To give an example of what this involved, let me show a comparison of the statements for one slide which were associated with the Paired Hands Test for children and the statements for the same slide on the Paired Hands Test-Adult:

Show Transparency #1

The test was administered to 72 undergraduate and graduate students at Indiana State University (their mean age being 23.8 years), and their responses were scored. Of these, twelve subjects whose scores were one standard deviation or more above or below the mean for the total were selected; thus, in this study, it resulted in six low-scorers and six high-scorers. The subjects were divided into three groups of four each;

their inclusion in a group was random with respect to their Paired Hands Test scores. This was done in the belief that random assignment to groups would more accurately reflect natural social groupings. I'll show you the composition of the groups as a result of this randomization:

Show Transparancy #2

A task was then designed to permit the subjects to work together for a period of ten minutes; through tape-recordings and visual inspection through a one-way mirror, their behaviors could be recorded. This task was also a change from the tasks used by Drs. Barnett and Zucker in their initial research. In a short, preliminary trial, adult subjects were observed to work on a jig-saw puzzle similar to that on which children had worked in earlier research, in a very efficient manner, eliciting few verbal responses. Thus, an aspect of the task requiring rather complex group interaction was added for the three groups in this study. The adults were still free to offer their individual cooperation spontaneously and at their own choosing, but in order for the task to succeed in the short time alotted - ten minutes - some type of group interaction was necessary.

The responses from the adults were analyzed in a way similar to that described by Dr. Barnett in his report. The verbal statements of the subjects were scored for task-relatedness and the general positive or negative effect they made upon others.

The formal hypotheses I had established prior to the experiment were: 1) that adults whose scores on the Paired Hands Test were one standard deviation or more above the mean for the group from which they came (or high-scorers) would have significantly more positive-coded responses than

those who had obtained scores one standard deviation or more below the mean (or low-scorers), and 2) that high-scorers would have significantly more task-related responses than low-scorers. The significance was to be determined at the .05 level.

The results provided support for the Paired Hands Test as a potentially useful technique for identifying those adults who can work cooperatively and effectively together in small groups and those who cannot. The primary hypothesis was substantiated: high-scoring adults did give significantly more positive-coded responses than low-scoring adults in this study. The secondary hypothesis was not upheld - the high- and low-scoring adults showed no significant difference in the task-relatedness of their responses; their responses were in general all very task-related.

Before I continue, I must comment on the nature of this research. It is certainly limited by the small sample size; later I will make reference to an on-going study involving over one thousand adult subjects which we hope will overcome this difficulty. Also, particularly limited are the interpretive statements which can be drawn from this specific population of adults - one that I recognize is a college student sample and not representative of adults in general. Yet, it is just this fact which leads me to believe that the failure of the data to substantiate the secondary hypothesis does not invalidate the Paired Hands Test as an effective predictor of group behavior - small group behavior. For, these adults were highly motivated to comply with instructions, to work, as good students, through a task of relatively short duration without engaging in non-task-related activities. Adults in a population at large highly likely would

be prone to more diverse responses, ranging from very task-related ones to perhaps anit-social, aggressive and specifically non-task-related ones.

The others-concept does, therefore, appear to be a personality variable which is predictive of small group behavior in adults as well as in children. This offers a strong basis for future reseach in the test, since it suggests the following:

1) There may be a developmental pattern to others-concept scores, a pattern which may be specific to certain sub-populations (whose demographic classifications might vary according to sex, race or ethnic background, socioeconomic status, age, intelligence, or other factors), but which on the whole is characteristic and specific. As was mentioned earlier, a recent study which is yielding yet-to-be analyzed data, employed one thousand and fifty-eight college freshman as subjects; they were administered the Paired Hands Test-Adult (an improved newer version). From this study we have already learned that the others-concept scores are significantly different in an upward direction from the scores for the fourth, fifth and sixth grade children reported previously. While the mean score for the children's group was 84.06 (for boys and girls combined), the mean score for the combined group of male and female adults was 91.87. Both means were derived from samples of over one thousand subjects; the stability of the scores as represented in almost equal standard deviations (11.15 for the children and 10.56 for the adults) obviously suggests very significant differences between the two means. The very real pattern that may be emerging from these studies is that a person's others-concept gradually increases from childhood into adulthood. This may seem an obvious condition since inherent in the typical maturation pattern we see an increasing social interactiveness, and that human beings

generally do adjust to a world in which "getting along with others" is a behavior pattern learned by a majority of society's members.

2) As you will hear in the next presentation by Dr. Dean Meinke, there appears the prospect of changing the others-concept of children through the appropriate arrangement of experiences, experiences designed to change the behaviors of children who obtained low others-concept scores and whose behavior is seen as in need of improvement. The present research suggests that the others-concept of children may be capable of being measured in a consistent and continuous manner through childhood and into adulthood, and, therefore, that the effectiveness of intervention programs designed to change a person's perceptions about and behaviors with others can be determined. Surely it will be important to consider the many variables which also help shape behavior - environmental, motivational and other personality variables - before predictive statements can be made about a person's behavior; but the others-concept at least is demonstrated in a distinguishable, longitudinal manner.

3) With a tool which can be applied to children and adults in an efficient, objectively-scoreable fashion, the prospects for international and cross-cultural research involving the others-concept are heightened. The strongest statement I can make in concluding my remarks, and in supporting the importance of furthering the research into the others-concept, is that I hope to carry out just such a cross-cultural study in the coming year, and through this, to substantiate the effectiveness of this unique contribution to personality assessment.

Transperancy 1

STATEMENTS FOR
CHILDREN'S PHT

1. They are helping each other catch a grasshopper.
2. The hands are getting ready to fight.
3. The hands are working together on a science project.
4. It's a happy meeting of two close friends.
5. One hand is handing the other a glass of water.

STATEMENTS FOR
ADULT'S PHT

1. Choosing up sides with a baseball bat.
2. The hands are getting ready to fight.
3. Holding a stake steady so that it can be driven into the ground.
4. Arguing over whose gun it is.
5. One hand is handing the other a glass of water with a dangerous drug in it.

Transperancy 2

Table I

Z Score, Classification, and Groups for Subjects

Subject	Z Score	Classification	Group
1	-1.59	Low	
2	+1.35	High	
3	+1.35	High	A
4	+2.34	High	
5	-1.13	Low	
6	-1.00	Low	
7	+1.33	High	B
8	+1.70	High	
9	-1.74	Low	
10	-1.13	Low	
11	-1.00	Low	C
12	+1.33	High	